

Readings for the Seasons

OF THE

Nativity and Epiphany



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*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace
among men of good will."*

(ST. LUKE 2:14)

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FOREWORD

THOSE who do not wholly understand the sequence of the seasons and feasts of the calendar of the Church are sometimes under the impression that the coming of the shepherds to Bethlehem and that of the three Wise Men were simultaneous events. However, it is the opinion of many scholars that Jesus was at least a year old when the Magi reached Bethlehem, because of the great distance they had to travel from their homes in the far-off Orient. In any event, a definite lapse of time is indicated by liturgical observance. While the visit of the shepherds, representing the children of Israel, is commemorated on the twenty-fifth of December, the celebration of the coming of the Magi is delayed until the sixth of January. St. Fulgentius expresses this in his fifth sermon on the Epiphany, when he tells us: "The shepherds were the first called of the Jews while the Magi were the first called of the Gentiles. The shepherds were drawn from near at hand while the Magi were led from afar."

We have prepared this little booklet as a sequel to *Readings for the Season of Advent* to provide interested persons with a few thoughts for the great feasts of the Nativity and the Epiphany, each in its proper place. May the readers derive spiritual delight and consolation from these beautiful and meaningful passages of Holy Writ.

P. T. Q.

I. CHRIST IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF CHRIST

Reading from St. John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God;
and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through Him,
and without Him was made
nothing that has been made.

In Him was life,
and the life was the light of men.
And the light shines in the darkness;
and the darkness grasped it not.

There was a man,
one sent from God,
whose name was John.

This man came as a witness,
to bear witness concerning the light,
that all might believe through him.

He was not himself the light,
but was to bear witness to the light.

It was the true light
that enlightens every man
who comes into the world.

He was in the world,
and the world was made through Him,
and the world knew Him not.

He came unto His own,
and His own received Him not.

But to as many as received Him
He gave the power of becoming sons of God;
to those who believed in His name:

Who were born not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh,
nor of the will of man,
but of God.



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L. JAMBOUR

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The Marriage of Mary and Joseph

And the Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among us.
And we saw His glory —
glory as of the only-begotten of the Father —
full of grace and of truth.

THE HUMAN ORIGIN OF CHRIST

Reading from St. Matthew 1:1-16

The book of the origin of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judas and his brethren. Judas begot Phares and Zara of Thamar, Phares begot Esron, Esron begot Aram. And Aram begot Aminadab, Aminadab begot Naasson, Naasson begot Salmon. Salmon begot Booz of Rahab. Booz begot Obed of Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, Jesse begot David the king.

And David the king begot Solomon of the former wife of Urias. Solomon begot Roboam, Roboam begot Abia, Abia begot Asa. And Asa begot Josaphat, Josaphat begot Joram, Joram begot Ozias. And Ozias begot Joatham, Joatham begot Achaz, Achaz begot Ezechias. And Ezechias begot Manasse, Manasse begot Amon, Amon begot Josias. And Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren at the time of the carrying away to Babylon.

And after the carrying away to Babylon Jechonias begot Salathiel, Salathiel begot Zorobabel. And Zorobabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliachim, Eliachim begot Azor. And Azor begot Sadoc, Sadoc begot Achim, Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.



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The Nativity

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THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Reading from St. Luke 2:1-20

Now it came to pass in those days, that a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This first census took place while Cyrinus was governor of Syria. And all were going, each to his own town, to register.

And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem — because he was of the house and family of David — to register, together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds in the same district living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them and the glory of God shone round about them, and they feared exceedingly.

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all the people; for today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you: You will find an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among men
of good will."

And it came to pass, when the angels had departed from them into heaven, that the shepherds were saying to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they went with haste and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. And when they had seen, they understood what had been told them concerning this Child. And all who heard marvelled at the things told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept in mind all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them.

SIMEON TAKES THE CHILD IN HIS ARMS

Reading from St. Luke 2:21-38

And when eight days were fulfilled for His circumcision, His name was called Jesus, the name given Him by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

And when the days of her purification were fulfilled according to the Law of Moses, they took Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord — as it is written in the Law of the Lord,

“Every male that opens the womb shall be
called holy to the Lord” —

and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord,
“a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

And behold, there was in Jerusalem a man named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by inspiration of the Spirit into the temple. And when His parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he also received Him into his arms and blessed God, saying,

“Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord,
according to Thy word, in peace;
Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,
which Thou hast prepared before the face of
all peoples:
A light of revelation to the Gentiles,
and a glory for Thy people Israel.”

And His father and mother were marvelling at the things spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

There was also Anna, a prophetess, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her maidenhood, and by herself as a widow to eighty-four years. She never left the temple, with fastings and prayers worshipping night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give praise to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

II. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

THE PROPHECY CONCERNING THE MAGI

Reading from Isaías 60:1-6

Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.

Lift up thy eyes round about, and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.

Then shalt thou see, and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee.

The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephra: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense: and showing forth praise to the Lord.



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The Visit of the Magi

THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

Reading from St. Matthew 2:1-12

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." But when King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and so was all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet,

'And thou, Bethlehem, of the land of Juda,
art by no means least among the princes of Juda;
For from thee shall come forth a leader
Who shall rule My people Israel.' "

Then Herod summoned the Magi secretly, and carefully ascertained from them the time when the star had appeared to them. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, "Go and make careful inquiry concerning the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may go and worship Him."

Now they, having heard the king, went their way. And behold, the star that they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. And when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly. And entering the house, they found the Child with Mary His mother, and falling down they worshipped Him. And opening their treasures they offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another way.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

Reading from St. Matthew 2:16-18

Then Herod, seeing that he had been tricked by the Magi, was exceedingly angry; and he sent and slew all the boys in Bethlehem and all its neighborhood who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the Magi. Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremias the prophet,

"A voice was heard in Rama,
weeping and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be comforted,
because they are no more."

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Reading from St. Matthew 2:13-15

But when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, "Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I tell thee. For Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him." So he arose, and took the Child and His mother by night, and withdrew into Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod; that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled,

"Out of Egypt I called My Son."



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The Flight into Egypt

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

Reading from St. Matthew 2:19-23 and St. Luke 2:40

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So he arose and took the Child and His mother, and went into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there; and being warned in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee. And he went and settled in a town called Nazareth; that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets,

"He shall be called a Nazarene."

And the Child grew and became strong. He was full of wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him.



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"And the Child grew and became strong. He was full of wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him."

BOOKLETS IN THIS SERIES

- 1) Readings for the Season of Advent
- 2) Readings for the Seasons of the Nativity and Epiphany
- 3) Readings for the Paschal Season
- 4) Readings for the Season of Pentecost
- 5) Readings for the Recitation of the Rosary

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